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Child trafficking gone from bad to worse: SC

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Google set to battle US government

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Govt allocates Rs 85 per day for jail inmates' meals

HAMEED ASHRAF
BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

A Right to Information (RTI) query has revealed that the Karnataka government allocates just Rs 85 per day for food served to each prisoner across the State's prisons. This raises concerns about nutritional standards and inmate welfare. This was revealed after an RTI was filed by City-based activist Narasimhamurthy. He wrote a formal complaint to the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission (KSHRC), demanding immediate action and a revision of the prison food budget. *—Salar News*

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K'taka ex-DGP's wife arrested for killing him

BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

The wife and daughter of former Karnataka DGP Om Prakash have been booked for murder following a complaint by his son, Karthikesh, who alleged their involvement in the officer's killing, Bengaluru police confirmed on Monday. Police have arrested Om Prakash's wife Pallavi and daughter Kriti. In his complaint at HSR Layout Police Station, Karthikesh claimed that his mother Pallavi had issued death threats to Om Prakash over the past week. *—Salar News*

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Govt asks Google to remove Chinese app over map dispute

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), along with the Survey of India (SoI), has directed Google to remove the social app 'Ablo' from its Play Store, citing the app's incorrect depiction of the country's territorial boundaries. In the notice, the government said the China-based video chat platform, which has over 10,000 downloads on Google Play, misrepresented the Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, and entirely omitted Lakshadweep Island from its map.

The government has requested an "early action" update from authorities. *—Agencies*

POPE FRANCIS DIES AT 88 ON EASTER MONDAY

The 'Pope of the slums' was battling respiratory diseases

VATICAN CITY, 21 APRIL

Pope Francis died on Easter Monday at the age of 88. The Argentine pontiff, is history's first from Latin America, who presided over the Catholic Church for more than 12 years.

The death of Francis was announced by Cardinal Kevin Farrell, the Irish-born Vatican camerlengo, a position that will be important in the coming weeks as he takes charge of the administration of the Holy See until a new pope is elected.

Francis made his final public appearance a day earlier on Easter Sunday.

He blessed a crowd of faithful from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica. "Brothers and sisters, Happy Easter," he said from the same loggia where Jorge Mario Bergoglio was introduced to the world on 13 March, 2013, as the 266th pope.

Francis also made a surprise ride in the square in his popemobile, drawing wild cheers and applause.

Francis, who suffered from chronic lung disease and had a part of lung removed, was admitted to Gemelli hospital on 14 February, 2025, for pneumonia. He spent 38 days there, the longest hospitalisation of his 12-year papacy. He returned to the Vatican on 23 March.

Francis earned the nickname "the pope of the slums" for his deep commitment to the poor and marginalised

Meanwhile, India announced three day state mourning throughout the country.

The dates haven't been announced yet, but the burial must take place between the fourth and sixth day after his death. After the funeral, there are nine days of official mourning, known as the "novendiali."

During this period, cardinals arrive in Rome to participate in a conclave to elect the next pope. The cardinals will vote in secret sessions, and after each voting sessions, the ballots will be burned in a special stove. Black smoke will indicate that no pope has been elected, while white smoke will indicate that the cardinals have chosen the next Pope. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2, 3 & 5

People light candles in a tribute to Pope Francis in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

> **Deeply saddened by the passing of His Holiness Pope Francis—a symbol of peace and compassion. His life was a message of love for the poor and hope for the world** —Siddaramaiah, CM

ELECTION OF THE NEXT POPE

Only cardinals under age 80 can elect the pope. Current regulations limit the number of electors to 120.

WHO ARE THE CANDIDATES? Any baptised Roman Catholic male is eligible Leading candidates are:

- **CARDINAL PIETRO PAROLIN** of Italy, 70, Francis' secretary of state and Vatican diplomat.
- **CARDINAL MARC OUELLET** of Canada, 80, head of the Vatican's bishops office from 2010 to 2023.
- **CARDINAL CHRISTOPH SCHOENBORN** of Austria, 80, a student of Pope Benedict XVI, and thus ostensibly having appeal for conservatives.
- **CARDINAL LUIS TAGLE** of the Philippines, 67, head of Vatican's missionary office.
- **CARDINAL MATTEO ZUPPI** of Italy, 69, a Francis protégé who headed the Italian bishops conference.

PM Narendra Modi with US Vice President JD Vance, Second Lady Usha Vance and their children in New Delhi on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Modi, Vance talk trade pact amid US tariffs

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi engaged in discussions with US Vice President JD Vance on Monday, focusing on the ongoing negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement. The dialogues are expected to address the expansion of India-US strategic ties and New Delhi's concerns surrounding Washington's trade policies.

US President Donald Trump is to visit India later this year. Following a meeting between Modi and US President Donald Trump in Washington DC in February, both nations have committed to negotiating the initial phase of the trade agreement by autumn 2025. After their discussions, Prime Minister Modi will host a dinner for Vance, his Indian-origin wife Usha Chilukuri, and the accompanying US delegation.

Vance, accompanied by his family, arrived in Delhi for a four-day visit after a brief stop in Italy. Notably, he is the first US vice president to visit India in 12 years, following Joe Biden's trip in 2013. His visit comes on the heels of President Trump's recent imposition and subsequent pause of sweeping tariffs affecting around 60 countries, including India.

Negotiations are currently underway to finalise a bilateral trade agreement, which is expected to cover key issues such as tariffs and market access. Additionally, the US is pressuring India to increase imports of American oil, gas, and military equipment to mitigate a trade deficit that currently favours India by approximately USD 45 billion. In 2023, bilateral trade between the two nations reached USD 190 billion, making the US India's largest trading partner. Moreover, during the financial year 2023-24, the US was the third-largest source of FDI in India. *—PTI*

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SC REFERS BSY'S PLEA TO LARGER BENCH ON CORRUPTION CASE

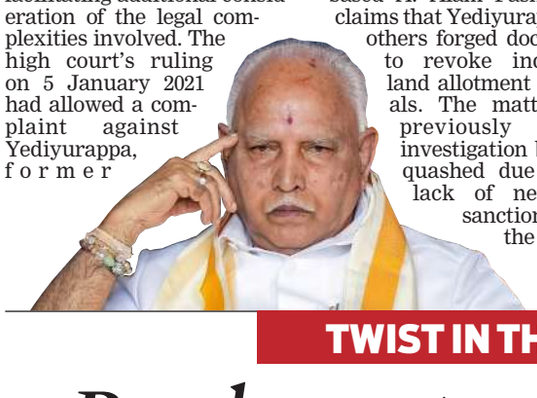
NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Supreme Court has referred legal questions arising from BJP leader BS Yediyurappa's plea regarding a revived corruption case to a larger bench. The referral comes as the bench was about to deliver its judgment against the Karnataka High Court's order when it discovered a similar matter pending before a larger bench.

Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra noted that maintaining judicial propriety necessitated this referral, facilitating additional consideration of the legal complexities involved. The high court's ruling on 5 January 2021 had allowed a complaint against Yediyurappa, former Industries Minister Murugesh R Nirani, and Shivaswamy KS regarding allegations of corruption.

Central to the legal debate is whether prior sanction to prosecute under the Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA) is necessary after a judicial inquiry is ordered. The court has framed a series of pertinent questions, including the implications of Section 156(3) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Section 17A of the PCA.

The allegations stem from a complaint by Bengaluru-based A. Alam Pasha, who claims that Yediyurappa and others forged documents to revoke industrial land allotment approvals. The matter was previously under investigation but was quashed due to the lack of necessary sanction under the PCA. *—PTI*



We are accused of encroaching upon Parl, executive functions: SC

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Supreme Court of India is facing allegations of encroaching on parliamentary and executive functions, as observed by Justice B R Gavai during discussions on recent violence in West Bengal. This remark highlights ongoing tensions between the judiciary and political figures following comments from BJP MP Nishikant Dubey and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, who accused the court of overstepping its authority.

Justice Gavai's comments came while the court considered a plea for an inquiry into violence that erupted during protests against the Waqf (Amendment) Act in West Bengal. Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, representing petitioners who have previously requested President's Rule in the state, emphasised the need for immediate action and paramilitary deployment.

- Dubey's remarks, which included suggestions to close Parliament if the Supreme Court was to legislate, were condemned as damaging to judiciary's reputation.

In tandem with these developments, the court informed a petitioner seeking to file a contempt case against Dubey that permission was not required to do so. Dubey's remarks, which included suggestions to close Parliament if the Supreme Court was to legislate, were condemned as damaging to the judiciary's reputation. Subsequently, BJP President JP Nadda distanced the party from Dubey's comments, affirming respect for the judiciary as vital to democracy.

Recent unrest has resulted in fatalities and widespread displacement, intensifying calls for judicial intervention and oversight in West Bengal.

Former Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi has responded to BJP MP Nishikant Dubey's derogatory comments, in which Dubey referred to Quraishi as a "Muslim commissioner". Quraishi expressed his belief in an inclusive India, stating, "I believe in an idea of India where an individual is defined by his or her talents and contributions and not by their religious identities. But I guess, for some, religious identities are a staple to forward their hateful politics." *—PTI*

Govt writes to UK over RaGa's dual citizenship

LUCKNOW, 21 APRIL

The Indian government has reached out to the UK to gather information regarding allegations of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi holding British citizenship, the Allahabad High Court was informed on Monday.

During proceedings, the Lucknow bench granted the central government an extension until May 5 to report back on a public interest litigation (PIL) aimed at cancelling Gandhi's candidacy for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections due to these citizenship claims.

Petitioner S Vignesh Shishir, a BJP member from Karnataka, asserts that he possesses documents and emails from the British government that confirm Rahul Gandhi's British citizenship, which he argues renders Gandhi ineligible for election and unsuitable to serve as a Lok Sabha member.

During the hearing, Deputy Solicitor General SB Pandey revealed that the ministry had formally contacted the UK government for clarification regarding Gandhi's alleged citizenship status. The court had previously requested information about the government's response to the petitioner's claims. The central government has sought additional time to address the matter thoroughly. *—PTI*

8 NAXALS KILLED IN JHARKHAND ENCOUNTER

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Eight Naxals, including a high-ranking member of the central committee carrying a bounty of Rs 1 crore on his head, were killed in an encounter with CoBRA commandos of the CRPF and local police in Bokaro district, Jharkhand, on Monday morning. The skirmish began around 5.30 am in the Lugu Hills of the Lalpania area. The operation saw personnel from the 209 Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) team up with state police, resulting in the deaths of the Naxals and the seizure of an AK-47, three INSAS rifles, a self-loading rifle, eight country-made firearms, and a pistol.

Among the deceased was Prayag Manjhi, alias Vivek, a central committee member, as well as Arvind Yadav, alias Avinash, a special area committee member. Others included Sahebram Manjhi, Mahesh Manjhi, and several more. Vivek had the largest bounty, while Yadav and Sahebram carried rewards of Rs 25 lakh and Rs 10 lakh, respectively. *—PTI*

TWIST IN THE TALE

Road rage turns bloody in City, IAF officer involved

BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

A 40-year-old Indian Air Force (IAF) officer was injured in a road rage incident near Gopalan Grand Mall in CV Raman Nagar early Monday morning, leading to the arrest of one individual.

The altercation occurred around 6.30 am when Wing Commander Shiladitya Bose and Squadron Leader Madhumita Dutta were en route to Kempegowda International Airport

The couple claimed a rash biker obstructed their car and kicked their car while abusing in Kannada. Bose stepped out of the car to confront the man and was allegedly assaulted.

Bose claimed he was targeted for not speaking Kannada. But Deputy Commissioner of Police D Devaraj said, "It was a case of road rage."

CCTV footage from the location shows bystanders intervening as the biker and the IAF officer hit each other *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

The couple's car, driven by Madhumita, reportedly grazed the biker while turning. The biker, Vikas Kumar, a 29-year-old call centre employee, was arrested. CCTV footage from the location shows bystanders intervening as the duo exchanged blows.

"He (Kumar) drove with high speed, which eyewitnesses said they saw and it was this behaviour that the lady officer objected. That's how the altercation started. Both sides could have ignored the incident. Vikas went to the wing commander asking him why his wife was speaking in that manner. This is when an argument began." "The bike key was in the hand of the accused Vikas and he has used it to punch. That is where the officer sustained injuries, the cop said. *—Salar News*

In SC, man claims Covid vaccine disabled him

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Supreme Court on Monday told a petitioner, who claimed he suffered disability as a side-effect of the Covid-19 vaccine's first dose, to file a suit for damages instead of pursuing his plea.

The petitioner's counsel said the man was suffering from the adverse effects of immunisation after taking the first dose of Covid vaccine as he developed 100 per cent lower limb disability.

"If you keep your petition pending here, nothing will happen for ten years. At least if you file a suit, you will get relief in two-three years," A bench of Justices BR Gavai and Augustine George Masih said.

"How can a writ petition be filed for that? File a suit for damages," Justice Gavai said.

The plea sought a direction to the Centre and the manufacturer of Covishield vaccine, Serum Institute of India, to ensure the petitioner was able to live with dignity as a physically disabled person.

It also sought a direction to them to reimburse his medical expenses and take responsibility for his future medical expenses for the treatment of his physical disability after being administered the first dose of the vaccine.

The counsel said there were two separate petitions raising similar issue pending in the apex court and the coordinate benches had issued notice on them. *—PTI*

- The counsel said there were two separate petitions raising similar issue pending in the apex court .

Bengaluru to see 'Zero shadow' on 24 April

BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

At exactly 12.17pm on 24 April, when the sun is directly overhead, Bengaluru will experience the 'zero shadow' phenomenon, according to scientists at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA). Niruj Mohan Ramanujam, Head of IIA's Science Communication, Public Outreach, and Education (SCOPE) section, said that during this event, the sun reaches its zenith, causing vertical objects to cast no visible shadows as they fall directly beneath them. All locations in India situated below the Tropic of Cancer—including Bengaluru, Chennai, and Mangaluru—experience Zero Shadow Day, Ramanujam told PTI. *—PTI*

Wrestler ends life after threats from ex-boyfriend

GADAG, 21 APRIL

Haunted by threats from her former boyfriend, a 29-year-old physical education teacher, whose wedding was planned for the last week of this month, ended her life by hanging herself at her residence on Sunday. The teacher was also a national-level wrestler with numerous victories to her credit. The woman, who worked at a private English medium school in Gadag, had ended her five-year relationship with the accused Mailari. In her suicide note, she stated that her ex-boyfriend, with whom she had not spoken for several weeks, contacted her after seeing her wedding preparations and celebrations at her home. He allegedly threatened to disclose their shared photographs on social media platforms if she did not call off her wedding. She was the youngest of three sisters and the sole provider for her family. The Gadag rural police have apprehended Mailari. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support *—Salar News*

PHOTO: ANI

2 killed in separate accidents in Nanjangud

MYSURU, 21 APRIL

Two people were killed and one critically injured in separate road accidents in Mysuru's Nanjangud on Monday. In the first incident, Bhavani, 35, of Nanjangud died on the spot after falling from a bike and being run over by a lorry on Rashtrapathi Road. Her husband Mahesh, who was riding the bike, sustained serious injuries and was shifted to a private hospital in Mysuru. Police have seized the lorry and taken the driver into custody. A case has been registered by Nanjangud Traffic Police. In another accident near Taraganahalli village, Govinda, 34, was killed instantly when an overspeeding car hit him while he stood roadside. The car driver fled, abandoning the vehicle. *—Salar News*

Govt allocates ₹85/day for prisoners' meals

RTI reveals 14-hour gap between meals, a case has been filed against govt

HAMEED ASHRAF
BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

A Right to Information (RTI) query has revealed that the Karnataka government allocates just Rs 85 per day for food served to each prisoner across the State's prisons. This raises concerns about nutritional standards and inmate welfare.

This was revealed after an RTI was filed by City-based activist Narasimhamurthy. He wrote a formal complaint to the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission (KSHRC), demanding immediate action and a revision of the prison food budget.

According to the RTI response issued by the Central Prisons Department, this allocation is expected to cover three meals a day — breakfast, lunch, and dinner. However, it raises questions about the quality of meals served, especially for inmates with medical or dietary needs.

The meal reportedly includes ganji (rice gruel), rice with sambar, and occasionally a vegetable dish *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

The meal reportedly includes ganji (rice gruel), rice with sambar, and occasionally a vegetable dish. Non-vegetarian food is served only once a week. Incidentally, wealthier inmates enjoy better food and reportedly even food of their choice.

Speaking to **Salar News**, former inmates described the meals as insufficient and rigidly timed. While Breakfast between 7.15am and 8.30am, lunch is from 11am to 1.30pm, and dinner between 5.15pm and 5.45pm. After dinner, no food is available until breakfast, resulting in a 14-hour overnight gap without nourishment.

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The troubling reality of prison

- Breakfast: **7.15am and 8.30am.**
- Lunch: **11am to 11.30am.**
- Dinner: **5.15pm and 5.45pm.**
- A 14-hour overnight gap without any nourishment.
- Non-vegetarian meals are served once a week.

"If you miss a meal because you're sick or delayed, there's no second chance," said former inmate Ramesh from Ramanagara district. "I've gone to sleep hungry more times than I can count." Another ex-inmate from Bidar echoed the sentiment, noting that food often arrived late or in smaller portions on days when fights break out. "Jail isn't just about three meals and a roof. It's often far less."

Narasimhamurthy criticised the stark contrast between prisoner welfare and government spending.

"Prisoners are still human beings and deserve basic, nutritious food, this deprivation is unacceptable," he told Salar News. He has urged the KSHRC to intervene and direct the Prison Department to revise its budget.

When **Salar News** contacted KC Divyashree, Chief Superintendent of Police of Central Prison Bengaluru, there was no response.

—Salar News

On 20 April, the Hindi-Kannada row flared up again after a video surfaced of the incident went viral *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

Man harasses auto driver, apologises in Kannada

BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

In a fresh twist that has reignited the language debate, a man who was seen in a video that went viral, saying "So what if this is Bengaluru, speak Hindi", posted an apology in Kannada on Monday.

On 20 April, the Hindi-Kannada row flared up again after a video surfaced showing the man telling an auto driver: "Noida mein raho ya Bengaluru mein raho, tum bhi Hindi mein baat karo (Whether you're in Noida or Bengaluru, speak in Hindi)."

The auto driver promptly responded, "You have come to Bengaluru, speak in Kannada. I won't speak in Hindi."

The video, lacking clear context.

The man's identity remains unknown, and netizens have dubbed him the "Hindi warrior."

While some supported the need to speak Hindi in Bengaluru, many—especially Kannadigas—expressed outrage at being pressured to use a language that isn't native to the region.

In the "apology video" circulated online on Monday, the unidentified man said he did not intend to offend anyone and claimed he speaks Kannada, having lived in Bengaluru for nearly nine years.

He added that he went to the nearest police station to apologise for his behaviour, admitting he regretted losing his temper during the heated exchange.

The apology sparked fresh outrage, with some accusing Kannadigas of forcing people to apologise, while others questioned the man's sincerity. *—PTI*

Ex-DGP's son accuses mom of murder

BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

The wife and daughter of former Karnataka DGP Om Prakash have been booked for murder following a complaint by his son, Karthikesh, who alleged their involvement in the officer's killing, Bengaluru police confirmed on Monday.

Police have arrested Om Prakash's wife Pallavi and daughter Kriti in connection with the incident.

In his complaint at HSR Layout Police Station, Karthikesh claimed that his mother Pallavi had issued death threats to Om Prakash over the past week, prompting the former top cop to leave home and stay with his sister, Saritha Kumari, for safety.

According to the FIR, two days before the incident, daughter Krithi visited her father and convinced him to return home. It is learnt that after a heated exchange of words, Pallavi allegedly threw chilli powder on Prakash's face before stabbing him to death, police sources said.

People pay their last respects to former Karnataka DGP Om Prakash, in Bengaluru on Monday; (inset) Prakash and Pallavi *PHOTO: PTI*

As the hefty former police chief of Karnataka scrambled for relief from the burning sensation, Pallavi stabbed him multiple times with a knife and bottle, killing him on the spot, sources said.Sources said the murder was the result of frequent domestic disputes between the couple.

Karthikesh recounted that he was at the Karnataka Golf Association in Domlur when a neighbour, Jayashreedharan, called at around 5:10 pm, alerting him that his father was lying motionless. "I rushed home and found police and locals gathered. Inside, my father was lying in a pool of blood," he stated.

He has requested legal action against both his mother and sister.

Meanwhile, when police took Pallavi to the scene of crime, she told reporters present there that "domestic violence" was the reason behind the extreme step.

—Salar News with Agencies

Yaduveer condemns cutting of sacred thread at CET centre

MYSURU, 21 APRIL

MP Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar on Monday condemned janivara (sacred thread) cutting incident in Shivamogga's CET centre, stating his party firmly stands with State Brahmin Mahasabha.

Blaming Congress-led government for rising attacks on Hindus, he alleged that appeasement politics had emboldened such acts. He cited case of student Partha S Rao, who was allegedly barred from writing CET exams after his Janivara was removed from government college in Sagara. Similar incidents were reported in Thirthahalli and Bidar. He demanded justice for Partha and warned of statewide BJP agitation if such cases persist. City BJP has filed a police complaint, urging action against those responsible. *Salar News*

Archbishop Peter Machado

Beacon of light: Archbishop mourns Pope Francis death

BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

Condoling Pope Francis death, City Archbishop Peter Machado called the pontiff a "beacon of light in troubled times" and "a shepherd of the poor".

The Archbishop said the Archdiocese of Bengaluru joins the Universal Church in mourning of the 266th pope of the Catholic Church.

"Today, the world has lost not just the Supreme Pontiff, but a man of prayer, simplicity and immense compassion," he said.

Meanwhile, Legislative Assembly UT Khader also expressed his condolences. He said "On behalf of the Members of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly and the people of our state, I extend our deepest sympathies to the Catholic community and the Holy See. As the world mourns his passing, we pray that his soul may rest in eternal peace, and that his legacy of mercy and unity may continue to illuminate the path forward for humanity." *—Salar News*

PROTEST OVER BMTC JOBS

Members of Akhila Karnataka State Students Association protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Monday, demanding the final list and appointment orders for pending BMTC recruitments *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Probe intensifies as cops record Ricky's statement

BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

The probe into the attempted murder of Ricky Rai, son of former underworld figure Muthappa Rai, has gathered momentum with the Bidadi Police recording Rai's statement from his hospital bed.

Rai, who is recovering at Manipal Hospital in City, sustained gunshot wounds to his nose and right shoulder during the attack late Friday night near his Bidadi farmhouse. Though initially in a critical state, he is now stable and able to speak, allowing investigators to record a detailed account of the events.

In his statement, Rai named four individuals- Rakesh Malli, Anuradha, Nitesh Shetty, and Vaidhyanathan—as suspects in the shooting. He told police he had received a phone call around midnight on the night of the attack, prompting him to leave his Bidadi residence and head towards Sadashivanagar in his car. As he turned onto the main road from his farmhouse, assailants opened fire on him.

Rai said he had returned from Russia recently due to an ongoing land dispute that is under court litigation, which he believes could be the motive behind the attack.

Investigators are analysing call records, CCTV footage, and property-related disputes involving the named individuals. A senior officer said the special teams are pursuing multiple leads and believe the attack was premeditated.

Police are yet to make any arrests. *—Salar News*

'FILLS EMOTIONAL VOID'

Legal heirs entitled to relief in accidents: HC

BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

The High Court of Karnataka has held that not just the spouse but also adult children who are legal heirs of a deceased individual are entitled to compensation under the category "loss of consortium".

This form of compensation accounts for the emotional and familial void left behind after a person's untimely death, the HC said.

Justice CM Joshi, who presided over the case, declared that the wife and two adult sons of a man named Subhash, who died in a road accident, are each entitled to Rs 52,000 under the "loss of consortium category", bringing the total to Rs 1.56 lakh.

Subhash, a resident of Kalaburagi, lost his life on 7 April, 2019, after a vehicle collided with his motorcycle while he was returning home from a temple visit with his grandson.

- Justice CM Joshi, who presided over the case, declared that the wife and two adult sons of a man named Subhash, who died in a road accident, are each entitled to Rs 52,000 under the "loss of consortium category", bringing the total to Rs 1.56 lakh. Subhash, a resident of Kalaburagi, lost his life on 7 April, 2019, after a vehicle collided with his motorcycle.

Initially, on 18 March, 2021, the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal in Kalaburagi had awarded a compensation of Rs 10.30 lakh.

While Subhash's wife received compensation for loss of dependency, the claims made by their two sons were dismissed on the grounds that they were financially independent.

Challenging the tribunal's verdict, the family approached the High Court, arguing that the compensation was inadequate and that Subhash's actual monthly income of Rs 15,000 had not been accurately factored into the decision. Justice Joshi cited the Supreme Court's ruling in N Jayasree vs Cholamandalam MS General Insurance, which affirms that every legal heir who suffers due to the loss of a family member in a motor accident has the right to seek compensation. *—PTI*

MLC Yathindra defends 'scientific' caste census; DKS bashes Ashoka

MYSURU, 21 APRIL

MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah on Monday said the caste census, also known as the Socio-Economic and Educational Survey, conducted by the State OBC Commission, was scientifically done and covered 95 per cent of the State's population. There is no need for a fresh survey, he asserted.

He dismissed claims that population figures were manipulated, blaming "prejudiced mindsets" for objections. On Janivara's removal, he said the government is taking equal action against those disturbing religious sentiments, urging the BJP not to politicise the matter.

Yathindra rebutted former MP Pratap Simha's claim that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah raised the caste census to save his post, stating the Congress high command fully supports him.

Yathindra Siddaramaiah *PHOTO: ANI*

Hitting out at Leader of the Opposition R Ashok for spreading lies on caste census report, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar asked him to find out from Commission Chairman Jayaprakash Hegde if the report was real or fake. "Backward Classes Commission is an autonomous body. The sealed report was opened in the Cabinet meeting. It was video graphed as well."

- Hitting out at Leader of the Opposition R Ashok for spreading lies on caste census report, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar asked him to find out from Commission Chairman Jayaprakash Hegde if the report was real or fake.

Asked about Satish Jarkiholi's statement that it would take a year to implement the caste census report, he said, "The discussions of Cabinet meetings are not to be discussed in the public." *—Salar News*

12 detained in Odisha for Murshidabad riots

BHUBANESWAR, 21 APRIL

Twelve individuals were detained in Jharsuguda district, Odisha, on Monday in connection with recent violence in Murshidabad, West Bengal, according to police reports. The arrests were made by a Special Task Force (STF) from the West Bengal Police. Among those apprehended are the sons of Ziaul Sheikh, a key suspect in the murder of a man and his son during the unrest in Jafrabad, Murshidabad. The detainees had previously worked as labourers in Bundubahal but returned to their hometown in Murshidabad during Eid, where it is alleged they participated in the violence. Following their return to Jharsuguda, they went into hiding. *—PTI*

AAP opts out of upcoming Delhi mayor elections

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has announced it will not contest the upcoming elections for mayor and deputy mayor of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), scheduled for 25 April. At a press conference, former Delhi Chief Minister Atishi stated that the AAP aims to serve as a robust opposition, condemning the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for alleged malpractice and "horse-trading" during recent elections. AAP Delhi chief Saurabh Bharadwaj further accused the BJP of corruption during the delimitation process and claimed that party councillors have disrupted MCD meetings. With the BJP's strength in the MCD growing to 119 following several defections from AAP, Bharadwaj emphasised their decision to avoid the mayoral race. The MCD Secretary's Office confirmed that elections will take place at 2pm on 25 April. *—PTI*

West Bengal Guv hospitalised but stable

KOLKATA, 21 APRIL

West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose remains in a "stable" condition following his admission to the Eastern Command Hospital earlier today due to chest congestion. A senior official from Raj Bhavan confirmed that the Governor was admitted around 10am and is currently under medical observation. After a series of examinations, it was reported that his condition had "improved," and he may be discharged as early as tomorrow. The health issue arose after Bose returned from a visit to riot-affected areas in Murshidabad on Saturday night, prompting concerns about the toll his hectic schedule had taken on his health. Before heading to Salboni in Paschim Medinipur for the foundation stone laying of a new power plant, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee visited the Governor at the hospital, ensuring necessary measures were taken regarding his health. *—PTI*

Cong sacks Buxar chief for turnout at Kharge's speech

PATNA, 21 APRIL

The Bihar Congress has dismissed its Buxar district unit chief, Manoj Kumar Pandey, following a disappointing turnout at a rally addressed by party president Mallikarjun Kharge. Pandey has been suspended indefinitely and stripped of all organisational roles due to "irregularities and lack of coordination" in organising the event, which was themed 'Jai Bapu, Jai Bhim, Jai Samvidhan'. Rajesh Rathod, chairman of the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee's media cell, stated, "The party has decided to suspend Pandey due to lack of coordination and irregularities on his part." Insiders noted that the rally saw numerous empty chairs, leading to noticeable embarrassment among senior leaders. Congress MLA Sanjay Kumar Tiwary was reportedly seen urging attendees to fill the seats, but many were unoccupied in the event. *—PTI*

RaGa calls EC 'compromised' in US; BJP dubs him 'traitor'

BJP says he is venting his anger after the National Herald case

LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi welcomed upon his arrival at Boston Logan International Airport, USA, on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

BOSTON/NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Election Commission is "compromised", Congress leader Rahul Gandhi claimed at an event in the US, citing the turnout figures in the Maharashtra election. The comments drew a strong reaction from the BJP, which labelled him a "traitor".

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha claimed that more people voted in the Maharashtra assembly elections than were enrolled. Gandhi alleged that "there is something wrong with the system".

Gandhi made the remarks at an event in Boston on Sunday.

"The Election Commission gave us a voting figure for 5.30pm, and between 5.30pm and 7.30pm, 65 lakh voters voted. This is physically impossible to happen. For a voter to vote, it takes approximately three minutes, and if you do the math, it would mean that there were lines of voters till 2am, but this did not happen," he said.

"When we asked them for the videography, they not only refused but also changed the law," Gandhi said.

"It is very clear to us that the Election Commission is compromised, and it is very clear that there is something wrong with the system," he said.

However, the BJP linked his criticism to the Enforcement Directorate's action in the National Herald case. BJP MP and national spokesperson Sambit Patra alleged that Gandhi was venting his ire.

"Nothing will happen by doing so. You will not be spared. You and your mother will be caught with proceeds of crime and sent to jail," he said. Gandhi should contest elections from some other country, he added.

The Congress rallied behind Gandhi, with spokesperson Pawan Kera saying it doesn't matter from where one speaks. "We have doubts about the ECI," he said. *—PTI*

> **You are a traitor, not just because you insult Indian institutions and Indian democracy on foreign soil but also because you and your mother have embezzled crores of rupees of the country in the National Herald case**
>
> -Sambit Patra, BJP National Spokesperson

> **It is very unfortunate that whenever Rahul Gandhi is abroad, he does not miss sharing his hateful thoughts towards India and India's democratic systems**
>
> -Dharmendra Pradhan, BJP Union Minister

US Vice President JD Vance with Second Lady Usha Vance and their children visits Akshardham temple in New Delhi, on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

Vance and family begin 4-day visit

NEW DELHI/ SAN FRANCISCO 21 APRIL

US Vice President JD Vance and his family began a four-day visit to India on Monday as the two countries look to conclude the first tranche of an ambitious trade deal.

Vance, accompanied by his Indian-origin wife Usha Chilukuri, their three children -- Ewan, Vivek, Mirabel -- and a delegation of senior US government officials, landed in Delhi to a warm welcome at around 9.50am.

The US Vice President and the Second Lady were received at the Palam Air Base by Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw with artistes performing traditional Indian dances to welcome the guests.

Vance was accorded a ceremonial guard of honour at the airbase. Apart from his meeting with Prime Minister Modi this evening, Vance and his family's trip to India is largely a personal visit.

The visit spanning Delhi, Jaipur and Agra is expected to further deepen the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership, Jaiswal said.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said India is "actively engaging" with the new US administration and hopes to conclude the first tranche of the bilateral trade agreement "positively" by September-October this year.

"We are one of the countries which is actively engaged with the new administration of the US to see how best we can get a bilateral trade agreement done," she said.

Earlier, US President Donald Trump and Modi agreed to launch talks for a bilateral trade deal amid the lurking fear of reciprocal tariff. *—PTI*

AMID NUCLEAR THREAT

Israeli Prez calls for closer ties with India

JERUSALEM, 21 APRIL

During a meeting with India's newly appointed Ambassador to Israel, JP Singh, Israeli President Isaac Herzog urged India to deepen bilateral ties and cooperate on crucial geostrategic issues, particularly the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) project, which he hailed as the "future of the world."

Herzog expressed, "We have a huge respect for the nation of India and its leadership. I can only anxiously wait to visit your country." He underscored the importance of collaboration on strategic matters, including returning hostages and addressing the Iranian nuclear threat, stating, "This is our highest priority. They are going through hell and we are very worried and disturbed by it."

Highlighting IMEC's transformative potential, he remarked, "The connectivity between Israel and India will change the geostrategic situation in Europe, the United States, and Australia."

Ambassador Singh echoed Herzog's sentiments, affirming the strategic partnership between India and Israel, and elaborating on their collaboration in sectors such as agriculture, water management, IT, and defence. He noted the I2U2 initiative as another crucial project that promotes connectivity in the region.

Herzog also spoke on Iran's pursuit of nuclear capability, "We sincerely hope that there will be major developments that will prevent Iran from its goal." *—PTI*

Uddhav wants Raj to keep away from BJP-Shinde, says 'Saamana'

MUMBAI, 21 APRIL

The buzz around reunion of the Thackeray cousins grew louder as the editorial in 'Saamana' the Sena (UBT) mouthpiece seemed to sound the bugle in its editorial saying there will be no question of 'any issue' between party chief Uddhav Thackeray and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) president Raj Thackeray if the latter keeps away from the BJP and Shinde-led Sena.

"The possibility of rapprochement between Uddhav Thackeray and Raj Thackeray has rattled Maharashtra baiters. The BJP's ploy is to weaken Marathi unity", the editorial in 'Saamana' claimed. Referring to the MNS support to the third term of BJP Government at Centre, he accused the BJP and the Shinde-led Sena of using Raj Thackeray to hurt the Sena (UBT).

Students paint portraits of MNS chief Raj Thackeray, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and late Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray *PHOTO: PTI*

Both the MNS chief and former CM Uddhav Thackeray have said they were ready to put aside trivial fights, for Marathi unity.

Meanwhile, the Shiv Sena on Monday dubbed Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray a 'modern Duryodhan,' accusing him of never allowing his cousin Raj Thackeray to rise within Shiv Sena founded by Bal Thackeray. Party spokesperson Naresh Mhaske said at a press conference on Monday that an 'existential crisis' for Sena (UBT) pushed them to turn towards Raj Thackeray and claimed the latter would never fall for such overtures. *—PTI*

PANEL DEMANDS REVOCATION OF HINDI IN M'RASHTRA

PUNE, 21 APRIL

The Maharashtra government's language consultation committee has urged Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to revoke the decision of making Hindi compulsory for primary students in both Marathi and English medium schools.

Fadnavis dismissed concerns over the "imposition" of the Hindi, asserting that Marathi will continue to be compulsory, saying "NEP has provided an opportunity to learn three languages. Marathi is already compulsory. You cannot take any other language, except Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam or Gujarati."

In a letter to the Chief Minister, the language consultation committee's chief Laxmikant Deshmukh said, "The NEP states that education should be imparted through the mother tongue, and no language is made compulsory." *—PTI*

ED to return ₹15K cr to fraud victims

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has announced plans to restore approximately Rs 15,000 crore worth of assets to victims of fraudulent schemes, including real estate and Ponzi scams, throughout the current financial year.

The ED has intensified efforts for restitution under anti-money laundering laws since last year, aiming to ensure that rightful claimants receive compensation for financial crimes.

To date, assets totalling Rs 31,951 crore have been returned under these provisions. Notably, Rs 15,201.65 crore was restored in three significant cases involving fugitive offenders Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi, as well as the National Spot Exchange Limited (NSEL) case.

Recent data indicates that from August 2024 to April 2025, the agency has restored assets worth Rs 15,261.15 crore, with an additional Rs 1,488 crore during the current fiscal year (2025-26).

ED Director Rahul Navin has directed regional offices to actively pursue cases earmarked for restitution of the Rs 15,000 crore. *—PTI*

Kishor wants white paper on caste survey

PATNA, 21 APRIL

Prashant Kishor, founder of Jan Suraaj, has issued an ultimatum to the Nitish Kumar-led government in Bihar, threatening a mass agitation if his three demands — including a white paper on the caste survey — are not met within a month.

Kishor accused the government of failing to deliver on promises made in relation to the caste survey conducted last year. He noted that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had pledged a one-time financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh to Rs 94 lakh low-income families, yet no assistance has been distributed.

His second demand concerns the government's commitment to providing three decimals of land to 50 lakh Dalit and Mahadalit families for housing.

Lastly, Kishor called for an immediate halt to the ongoing land survey, , which has exacerbated disputes. *—PTI*

Race for tech supremacy has begun: Lt General

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Lt Gen Amardeep Singh Aujla, Master General Sustenance (MGS), on Monday said the race for technological supremacy has begun and called on the industry to work together with the armed forces to create a secure future for the country.

India can ill afford to be a mere spectator in this race for technological supremacy and the industry will have to take charge, the officer said in his address at an 'Industry Interactive Session' hosted by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry here.

Lt Gen Aujla told the representatives of various companies from the domestic defence industry that if the end user is the armed forces, quality should be the defining factor as "we are working for a national cause".

The industry and the armed forces can be "co-creators" of a very secure, robust and dynamic India of the future, Lt Gen Aujla said.

"Global dynamics are changing, India is also changing and so are the armed forces. When we are changing and we have got boots on the ground, we want equal boots on ground on the shop floor as well. So, let us not walk separately, let us march together, let's be comrades in capability development," he said. *—PTI*

Lt Gen Amardeep Singh Aujla *PHOTO: ANI*

- The Lt Gen noted that global dynamics are changing, and India can no longer afford to be mere spectators in the race for technological supremacy

AFTER 26 YEARS

A papal visit now lost: Pope was set to visit India in 2025

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Pope Francis was reportedly likely to visit India next year.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had met Pope Francis twice -- in 2021 and 2024 -- and extended an invitation for him to visit India that the pontiff had accepted.

Modi, along with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar first met Pope Francis in Vatican City in October 2021 on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Rome.

Modi also met Pope Francis on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Apulia, Italy, in June last year and renewed the invitation for him to visit India.

Union Minister George Kurian, who visited Vatican City last December, said the much-awaited visit was expected to take place after the celebrations of the jubilee year of Jesus Christ's birth by the Catholic Church in 2025.

The last papal visit to India was in 1999 when Pope John Paul II came to New Delhi to preside over the concluding celebrations of the Special Assembly of Synod of Bishops of Asia.

The first pontiff to visit India was Paul IV, who visited Mumbai in 1964. *—PTI*

Pope Francis with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Vatican City in October, 2021 *PHOTO: X/@PMO INDIA*

> **He diligently served the poor and downtrodden. For those who were suffering, he ignited a spirit of hope. His affection for the people of India will always be cherished.**
>
> -Narendra Modi, Indian PM

SKM ANNOUNCES CAMPAIGN AGAINST NDA IN BIHAR

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) on Monday announced that it will be holding 10 Mahapanchayats in Bihar to campaign among the people "to punish the BJP and NDA" in the upcoming state assembly elections.

It also extended support to a general strike called by the Central Trade Unions (CTUs) on 20 May against the new labour codes and said mass protests will be held independently by farmers and agricultural workers.

In a statement issued after a meeting of the General Body of the SKM on Sunday, the umbrella body of farmers' organisations said they will hold protests against the visit of US Vice President JD Vance, who arrived in India on Monday on a four-day visit, over the tariff issue.

It said the SKM's all-India leadership will attend the campaign. *—PTI*

Aamir Aziz accuses artist Dube of 'theft' of poem

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Four years after it caught headlines in the context of the anti-CAA protests across the country in 2021, poet Aamir Aziz's revolutionary text "Sab Yaad Rakha Jayega" is back at the centre of debate on the "rage against injustice". Aziz put out a series of social media posts across various platforms on Sunday to allege that renowned artist Anita Dube has used his poem without his "knowledge, consent, credit or compensation" in her works exhibited at Vadehra Art Gallery in the national capital. Dube's ongoing show "Three Storey House" showcases her recent body of works. The gallery expressed the hope that the issue can be "resolved in an amicable and constructive manner". —*PTI*

Rape accused shoots self to blame it on victim

BHUBANESWAR, 21 APRIL

A man was arrested in Bhubaneswar for allegedly shooting himself to blame it on the family of a girl, who accused him of rape, police said on Monday. He was recently released from custody on bail in the rape case, they said. In the early hours of Sunday, he lodged a complaint at the Balipatna police station, alleging that two persons related to the rape survivor shot him. "However, the preliminary investigation revealed that the gunshot injury is self-inflicted. He was arrested last year in a rape case. He plotted this episode to take revenge upon the family of the rape victim," Deputy Commissioner Jagmohan Meena said. "Forensic evidence showed that the bullet trajectory did not match an external attack."—*PTI*

Man beheads wife in Assam, surrenders

GUWAHATI, 21 APRIL

A man from Assam's Chirang district has been arrested after allegedly beheading his wife on Saturday night. The accused reportedly surrendered at the Ballamguri police outpost, carrying the severed head. Locals claim that the brutal act stemmed from a domestic dispute, raising concerns over domestic violence in the area. The victim's body has been sent for a post-mortem examination, as law enforcement agencies commence their investigation into the shocking incident. A police officer stated, "We have to wait for the probe to be over," emphasising the importance of a thorough investigation. The man, who works as a daily wage labourer, remains in police custody as authorities work to uncover the details surrounding this tragic event. —*PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

'Lady Don' says she's framed in Seelampur murder

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Zikra Khan, the 25-year-old woman known as the "Lady don" claimed she was innocent and being framed in the Seelampur stabbing case. A 17-year-old boy was stabbed to death in New Delhi on 17 April. Seven people, including Zikra were arrested and two more apprehending in connection with the case that sparked widespread protests. "I did not kill Kunal. I am being framed unnecessarily," Zikra, who is under police custody, told reporters on Monday, according to ANI. The teenager, Kunal, was allegedly stabbed by members of Zikra's gang in a revenge killing. During police questioning, Zikra reportedly said that in November last year, her cousin was attacked and stabbed by two of Kunal's friends. Kunal's two friends believe that the cousin is the responsible for the murder.—*Agencies*

Child trafficking gone from bad to worse: SC

Apex court notes intricate web of the traffickers is spread across the country

PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Supreme Court said that the child trafficking racket "seems to gave gone from bad to worse" on Monday.

A bench comprising justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan made the observations while interacting with a Delhi police inspector entrusted with the probe in a case over trafficking of several newborns in Dwarka area.

"The situation seems to have gone from bad to worse," Justice Pardiwala said and directed the police station concerned to take all necessary steps to arrest gang leader Puja and rescue the three missing infants.

"You never know where these children will land up. In the case of a girl child, you can guess," the bench said. "Unfortunately, the parents seem to have sold off their own children."

Delhi Police was represented by Additional Solicitor General Archana Pathak Dave.

- The top court asked the government to ensure the trafficked children were admitted in schools in accordance with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and had continued support

The court noted that intricate web of the traffickers spread across the country.

"An overall analysis of trafficking patterns across states reiterates the prevalence of trafficking in large numbers with the number of cases sharply rising with time. What is of concern is the rapid spread of the problem with previously unknown factors getting embedded in the web of traffickers," it said.

The changing trafficking patterns, the court said, brought "changes in the traffickers, their modus operandi, their manipulation of the victims and their understanding of the limitations in the criminal justice system".

The apex court on 15 April had delivered a significant judgement on the issue of inter-state child trafficking rackets in another case. It cancelled the bail granted to 13 accused in the case, saying the "cry of the collective for justice and its desire for peace and harmony" couldn't be trivialised.

The top court asked the government to ensure the trafficked children were admitted in schools in accordance with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and had continued support towards education. —*PTI*

SC TO EXAMINE PLEA CLAIMING SAMAY RAINA RIDICULED DISABLED

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

In what could spell fresh trouble for 'India's Got Latent' host Samay Raina, the Supreme Court on Monday said it would examine a plea claiming he ridiculed the disabled, including a person with visual disability and those suffering from a rare disorder like Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA).

Calling it a serious issue, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh asked senior advocate Aprajita Singh, appearing for NGO Cure SMA Foundation of India to file a proper petition instead of an interim intervention plea in the pending matter of influencer and podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia.

"This is a serious issue. You file a writ petition. We will see what can be done. In writ jurisdiction we have larger scope," the bench told Singh.

The bench took note of the statements that the probe against Allahbadia was complete and said it would on 28 April hear a plea for the return of his passport in a case over his distasteful remarks during Raina's show. —*PTI*

SC ALLOWS WITHDRAWAL OF PLEA FOR PROBE INTO WB VIOLENCE

New Delhi, 21 April

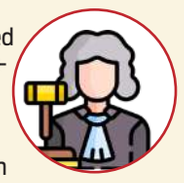
The Supreme Court on Monday allowed the petitioner to withdraw a plea seeking a court-monitored probe into the violence in West Bengal over the Waqf (Amendment) Act. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Koiswar Singh allowed the petitioner in- person advocate Shashank Shekhar Jha to withdraw the petition while granting him the liberty to file a fresh plea. The apex court said several of Jha's claims were unsubstantiated and relied heavily on media reports. "You seem to be in some kind of hurry," the bench said while hearing the petition. —*PTI*

SC DIRECTS PUJA KHEDKAR TO APPEAR BEFORE DELHI COPS ON 2 MAY

New Delhi, 21 April

The Supreme Court on Monday directed former IAS probationer Puja Khedkar, accused of cheating and wrongly availing of OBC and disability quota benefits in the civil services examination, to appear before Delhi Police on 2 May. A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma also said no coercive steps will be taken against Khedkar till 21 May, the next date of hearing. The court noted that no concrete investigation had taken place and directed Delhi Police to conclude the probe expeditiously. —*PTI*

SC COLLEGIUM RECOMMENDS TRANSFER OF 7 HC JUDGES



New Delhi, 21 April

The Supreme Court collegium has recommended the transfer of seven high court judges. The recommendations asked Justice Hemant Chandangoudar from Karnataka High Court to be sent to Madras High Court, Justice Krishnan Natarajan to Kerala, Justice Neranahalli Srinivasan Sanjay Gowda to Gujarat and Justice Dixit Krishna Shripad to Orissa High Court. In addition, it recommended transfers of Telangana High Court Justices Perugu Sree Sudha to Karnataka and Kasoju Surendhar to Madras High Court, respectively. Justice Kumbhajadala Manmadha Rao from Andhra Pradesh High Court was recommended to be transferred to Karnataka. —*PTI*

OBJECTIONABLE MATERIAL

Liking social media post different from sharing it, says HC

PRAYAGRAJ, 21 APRIL

- The petitioner had moved the court seeking quashing of a case against him for liking a post by one Chaudhari Farhan Usman, which referred to a protest gathering that would be assembling near the Collectorate to hand over a memorandum to the President of India

The Allahabad High Court observed that liking a social media post does not amount to transmitting or publishing it and will not attract Section 67 of the Information Technology Act which deals with obscene and objectionable material.

Justice Saurabh Srivastava observed this while quashing criminal proceedings against one Imran Khan of Agra.

The petitioner had moved the court seeking quashing of a case against him for liking a post by one Chaudhari Farhan Usman, which referred to a protest gathering that would be assembling near the Collectorate to hand over a memorandum to the President of India.

Khan was booked for "provocative messages on social media, which resulted in the assembly of about 600-700 persons belonging to the Muslim community for arranging a procession without permission."

Quashing the proceedings, the court had also observed, "Even otherwise Section 67 of the I.T. Act is for obscene material and not for provocative material".

The words "lascivious or appeals to the prurient interest" mean relating to sexual interest and desire, therefore, Section 67 I.T. Act does not prescribe any punishment for other provocative material," the court said.

During the hearing, the applicant's counsel had submitted that even no such content was found on his Facebook account. However, the police claimed he had deleted the same but similar content was found on WhatsApp and other social media platforms. From the material on record, the court found that Khan had merely liked a message published by another person and no offence was made out against him. —*PTI*

ISRO achieves 2nd docking in SpaDeX

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully accomplished the second docking of two satellites as part of its Space Docking Experiment (SpaDeX) mission, announced Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Monday.

In a post on X, Singh stated, "#ISRO SPADEX Update: Glad to inform that the second docking of satellites has been accomplished successfully." The SpaDeX mission, which aims to demonstrate in-orbit docking capabilities, was launched on 30 December last year, when ISRO deployed the satellites SDX01 and SDX02 into orbit.

Singh detailed that after the satellites' first successful docking on 16 January 2025 at 06.20am, they were undocked on 13 March 2025 at 09.20am. He added that further experiments are slated for the next two weeks.

The ISRO SpaDex mission had successfully achieved the undocking of two of its satellites PHOTO: ISROInsight/X/ Screengrab

With this achievement, India has joined the ranks as the fourth nation, after the US, Russia and China, to perform a space docking experiment. Mastering the techniques demonstrated in SpaDeX is essential for forthcoming missions, including plans to send an Indian astronaut to the Moon, retrieve samples from the lunar surface, and facilitate the construction and operation of the Bharatiya Antariksha Station. —*PTI*

- Union Minister Jitendra Singh said after the satellites' first successful docking on 16 January 2025 at 06.20am, they were undocked on 13 March 2025 at 09.20am. He added that further experiments are slated for the next two weeks

DAY AFTER DELUGE

A groom along with his relatives walks to the wedding venue on Monday, a day after roads were blocked by debris in landslides and flash flood in Ramban district of Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday. A man inspects a tanker stuck in debris PHOTO: PTI

THREAT TO 2 BILLION PEOPLE

Himalayan snow is at 23-year low

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Snow persistence – or snow that usually stays on the ground between November and March – was 23.6 per cent below normal levels in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region this year, a record low in the last 23 years, according to a new report.

The sharp drop in snow levels across the region could seriously affect water supply to nearly two billion people in India and neighbouring countries. This marks the third consecutive year of below-normal seasonal snow across the region, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), an intergovernmental body, said in the 2025 HKH Snow Update report published on Sunday.

Snow that typically remains on the ground during winter months has been melting faster or not falling in expected amounts. This snowmelt is a crucial water source for rivers, especially during the dry season.

ICIMOD's Director General Pema Gyamtsho said, "Carbon emissions have already locked in an irreversible course of recurrent snow anomalies in the HKH."

On average, snowmelt contributes about 23 per cent to the total yearly water flow in major river basins.

All 12 major river basins in the region, including those in India, China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Southeast Asia, have recorded below-normal snow levels this year. The situation is especially dire in the Mekong and Salween basins, which recorded snow persistence levels 51.9 per cent and 48.3 per cent below normal, respectively.

In India the Ganges basin experienced its lowest snow persistence in over two decades, at 24.1 per cent below normal. Similarly, the Brahmaputra basin dropped 27.9 per cent below normal.

ICIMOD experts warned that if this trend continues, the region could face more frequent water shortages, forcing greater reliance on groundwater and raising the risk of droughts. —*PTI*

Astronaut to grow crops, study tardigrades in space

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Shubhanshu Shukla PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla is set to embark on a historic 14-day mission to the International Space Station (ISS) next month, where he will conduct seven innovative experiments, including growing crops and researching the resilience of tardigrades, also known as water bears.

Scheduled for late May, the Axiom Mission-4 involves collaboration between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), NASA, and the European Space Agency (ESA). Tardigrades, renowned for their ability to endure extreme conditions, will be examined for their revival and reproduction in microgravity, providing insights into potential applications for future space exploration.

Experiments include a study on astronauts' interactions with electronic displays in microgravity, which aims to optimise technology use in space. The 'Space Microalgae' project will investigate the growth and metabolism of edible microalgae, and research on cyanobacteria aims to enhance life support systems in spacecraft. This mission marks a significant step in understanding life-supporting systems for future space exploration. —*PTI*

PEOPLE'S POPE

VATICAN CITY, 21 APRIL

Pope Francis, history's first Latin American pontiff, charmed the world with his humble style and concern for the poor but alienated conservatives with critiques of capitalism and climate change.

From his first greeting as pope — a normal "Buonasera" ("Good evening") — to his warmth towards refugees and the downtrodden, Francis signalled a different tone for the papacy, stressing humility over hubris for a Catholic Church beset by scandal and accusations of indifference. The Argentine-born Jorge Mario Bergoglio brought a breath of fresh air into a 2,000-year-old institution whose influence had waned during the tenure of Pope Benedict XVI. **Salar News** takes a look at his life's work.

REFORMING VATICAN AND BOOSTING TIES

Francis was elected on a mandate for bureaucratic reform after centuries of mismanagement and market crises put the Vatican's financial health at risk, but he went further in shaking up the church. In other firsts, he approved an agreement with China over bishop nominations that had vexed the Vatican. He also met the **Russian President Vladimir Putin**, and charted new relations with the Muslim world by visiting the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq. In his last message on Easter, he called for a ceasefire in Gaza and condemned the "deplorable humanitarian situation" caused by Israel's onslaught.

STAND ON ABORTION

Francis upheld church teaching against abortion, calling it part of today's "throwaway culture" and likening it to "hiring a hit man". He also opposed euthanasia. Yet, he allowed priests to absolve women who had abortions. He also rejected bishops' efforts to deny Communion to former US president Joe Biden over his abortion-rights stance.

CONTRACEPTION

Francis defended the church's opposition to artificial contraception, but he also said Catholics need not breed "like rabbits". In 2016, Francis said women threatened with Zika virus — which was causing malformations in children — could use artificial contraception because "avoiding pregnancy is not an absolute evil".

LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

In 2013, Francis said, "Who am I to judge?" when asked about a gay Vatican monsignor. He said God loves LGBTQ+ people & "being homosexual is not a crime". He also approved same-sex blessings and allowed transgenders to be baptised and witness weddings. Yet, he upheld church teaching that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered".

MISSTEPS ON SEXUAL ABUSE SCANDAL

It took over a year for Francis to meet with survivors of priestly sexual abuse. While he established a sex abuse commission, it lost influence, and its recommendation to create a tribunal for bishops who covered up abuse was not acted upon. The 2018 Chilean abuse crisis was a turning point when Francis initially discredited victims and supported a controversial bishop. After realising his mistake, he apologised to victims and pushed for the resignations of Chilean church leaders. A new crisis emerged over late ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, whom Francis defrocked after probe revealed abuse. He also changed church law to remove the pontifical secret and enacted law to probe bishops involved in abuse.

THE CHURCH AS REFUGE

Francis said the church should be a refuge for everyone, not just a privileged few. Migrants, the poor, prisoners and outcasts were invited to his table far more than presidents or CEOs. Francis demanded his bishops apply mercy and charity, and asked countries to address climate disasters and to welcome those fleeing war, poverty and oppression.
After visiting Mexico in 2016, Francis said of then-US presidential candidate Donald Trump that anyone building a wall to keep migrants out "is not Christian".

CHAMPIONING WOMEN

He appointed women to key Vatican roles. He named nuns to head the religious orders office and the Vatican City administration — roles once held only by cardinals — and another as undersecretary in the Synod of Bishops. He let women vote alongside bishops in Vatican meetings. He also added women to the bishop-vetting and economic councils, and honoured Mary Magdalene with a feast day. However, he paused on ordaining women deacons.

A SIMPLE MAN AND A BIG HEART

Francis chose simplicity, living in the Vatican hotel instead of the Apostolic Palace, wearing his old shoes instead of papal red loafers, and travelling in compact cars. As the first Latin American and Jesuit pope, he took the name of St. Francis of Assisi, known for his simplicity, peace, and care for society's outcasts. Francis ministered to the unemployed, sick, disabled, and homeless, apologising for past church wrongs. He showed mercy by touching the deformed head of a man, kissing a Holocaust survivor's tattoo, and inviting garbage scavengers to join him.

A CHANGE FROM BENEDICT

Pope Benedict XVI's 2013 resignation — Rome's 1st in 600 years — paved way for Francis' election and created the rare reality of two popes in the Vatican. Francis embraced Benedict as a wise adviser, saying, "It's like having your grandfather in the house." He praised Benedict for opening the door to future resignations, though after Benedict's 2022 death, Francis affirmed the papacy as a lifelong role. Francis overturned several Benedict-era decisions, including canonising Óscar Romero and reimposing limits on the Latin Mass. These moves sparked tensions with traditionalists.

HELPING DIVORCEES

Francis divided the church by allowing divorced and civilly married Catholics to receive Communion. He eased annulment procedures.

CONSERVATIVES TURN AGAINST POPE

Conservatives grew angry with Francis after he opened debate on allowing remarried Catholics to receive the sacraments without annulments. Criticism intensified over approval of same-sex blessings & a deal with China on bishop nominations.

LIFE UNDER ARGENTINA'S DICTATORSHIP

During Argentina's brutal 1976–83 dictatorship, Francis, then Jesuit provincial, didn't confront the regime and was accused of enabling the kidnapping of two priests. He stayed silent for decades, only later revealing secret efforts to save them — including a covert appeal in dictator Jorge Rafael Videla's home.

CAPITALISM

Conservatives accused Francis of Marxist leanings due to his critiques of economic systems that "idolise" money and his disdain for capitalism. He advocated for universal basic income, fair wages, and dignified work, warning that globalisation saves some but starves others.

CELIBACY NOT A DOGMA

Francis upheld celibacy for Latin Rite priests despite Amazon bishops' requests for exceptions, noting it's a discipline, not dogma, and could be revised.

COVID-19 VACCINE SUPPORTER

Francis supported vaccination and demanded the poor get priority. The Vatican said it was acceptable to be vaccinated, even with shots that used cell lines from aborted foetuses in research.

ENVIRONMENT ACTIVISM

Francis was the first pope to use scientific data in a major teaching, calling global warming largely human-caused. In his 2015 encyclical Praised Be, he condemned a "structurally perverse" economy and environmental neglect. A 2023 update warned of a "breaking point" and singled out US emissions.

LATIN MASS

In one of his most controversial moves, Francis reversed Benedict's decision and reimposed restrictions on celebrating the old Latin Mass.

Pope Francis tours St. Peter's Square after bestowing blessing at the end of the Easter mass presided in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican on Sunday. This was his last public appearance; In a memorable moment, a child once climbed onto the dais and sat in the Pope's chair as he delivered his address — a scene Pope Francis welcomed with a warm smile ***PHOTOS: PTI***

FROM BUENOS AIRES TO SHAKING UP VATICAN

17 DEC, 1936: Jorge Mario Bergoglio is born in Buenos Aires, the eldest of five children to Mario Jose Bergoglio and Regina María Sívori.

13 DEC, 1969: Ordained a priest

20 MAY, 1992: Named auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires

21 FEBRUARY, 2001: Elevated to cardinal by St. John Paul II.

12 FEBRUARY, 2016: Meets Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill and declares "We are brothers," in first meeting between a pope and patriarch in over 1,000 years.

13 MARCH, 2013: Elected 266th pope, the first from the America.

5-8 MARCH, 2021: Becomes first pope to visit Iraq, meeting with its top Shiite Muslim cleric.

19 MAY, 2019: Issues new church law requiring clergy sex abuse to be reported in-house.

21 FEB, 2019: Opens first Vatican summit on child protection.

4 FEB, 2019: Signs the "Human Fraternity" with the Imam of Al Azhar, establishing relations between Catholics and Muslims.

10 SEPT, 2024: 6L attend Francis' Mass in Dili. This was the biggest turnout for a papal event.

14 FEB, 2025: He was hospitalised after a bout of bronchitis worsens and then develops into pneumonia.

23 MARCH, 2025: Is released from the hospital after 38 days of treatment.

RESEARCH: AMINA AFAQ, DESIGN: G VISHWANAHTA

WHAT POPE SAID:

On death penalty: "Inadmissible"

On nuclear weapons: "Their use is immoral"

On LGBTQ+: "Who am I to judge?"

On globalisation: "This economy kills."

"The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful

WORLD PAYS TRIBUTE

He was a great man [and] a great shepherd. I had the privilege of enjoying his friendship, his advice, his teachings, which never ceased not even during times of trial and suffering

—Giorgia Meloni, Italian PM

Francis had won international renown as a faithful servant of Christian teaching, a wise religious and statesmanlike figure, and a consistent defender of the high values of humanism and justice

— Vladimir Putin, Russian President

At 7.35am, The Bishop of Rome, Francis, returned to the Father's house. He taught us to live the values of the Gospel with faithfulness, courage, and universal love, especially for the poorest and most marginalized.

— The Vatican

His Holiness will be remembered for his compassion, his concern for the unity of the Church and for his tireless commitment to the common causes of all people of faith, and to those of goodwill who work for the benefit of others

— King Charles

Rest in Peace Pope Francis! May God Bless him and all who loved him!

—Donald Trump, US President

China warns countries inking bilateral trade deals with US

Vows to sanction US officials for violating int'l law on HK

BEIJING, 21 APRIL

As tensions rise between the two largest economies of the world, China on Monday threatened to impose countermeasures on countries seeking to strike trade deals with the US at the expense of Chinese interests.

It also threatened to sanction United States officials, lawmakers and leaders of non-governmental organisations in reponse to US sanction of Chinese officials in March for eroding Hong Kong's autonomy.

A statement from the commerce ministry said China firmly opposed any deal between the US and its trading partners at the expense of Chinese interests. "If such a situation arises, China will not accept it and will resolutely take corresponding countermeasures. China has the right to resolve and the capability to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests" the statement said.

China's tough stand comes as a number of countries now seek to work out bilateral trade deals with Washington to resume trade amidst the tariff imposition.

The Wall Street Journal last week reported that the US plans to use tariff negotiations to pressure dozens of countries into imposing new barriers on trade with China. This will leave a host of countries, including Japan and the ASEAN, having lucrative trade with both China and the US in a quandary.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has sought to strengthen ties with ASEAN countries and just concluded a high-profile visit to Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia.

Meanwhile, Chinese foreign ministry has announced China will sanction United States officials, lawmakers and leaders of non-governmental organisations who it says have "performed poorly" on Hong Kong issues. "The US has seriously interfered in the affairs of Hong Kong and violated international law principles, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said. *—PTI*

Chinese President Xi Jinping has sought to strengthen ties with ASEAN countries **PHOTO: FREEPIK**

UKRAINE VOWS ACTION

Russia violated Easter truce 2,900 times

KYIV, 21 APRIL

Ukraine claimed Russia violated the ceasefire more than 2,900 times during the 30-hour Easter ceasefire unilaterally declared by President Vladimir Putin over the weekend even as Russia maintained it had observed ceasefire.

Overall, Russia violated the ceasefire more than 2,900 times, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a Telegram statement in the early hours on Monday. Zelenskyy said that Russian forces carried out 96 assault operations along the front line, shelled Ukrainian positions more than 1,800 times and used hundreds of drones during the course of the ceasefire.

"The nature of Ukrainian actions will continue to be mirror-like: we will respond to silence with silence, and our blows will be a defense against Russian blows. Actions always speak louder than words," he said.

The Russian Defence Ministry, in a statement on Monday, maintained that Moscow's forces "strictly observed the ceasefire and remained at previously occupied lines and positions." It accused Ukraine of violating the ceasefire 4,900 times, including six attempts at assault operations, 1,404 attacks from artillery, multiple rocket launchers and mortars, and 3,316 drone strikes targeting Russian troops.

The ministry said that once the ceasefire expired, the Russian military "resumed the special military operation" in Ukraine. Putin called a temporary Easter truce on Saturday, citing humanitarian reasons even as Ukraine remained skeptical. *—PTI*

Hegseth shared Yemen strike plan with family on chat

WASHINGTON, 21 APRIL

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth created another signal messaging chat that included his wife and brother where he shared similar details of a March military airstrike against Yemen's Houthi militants.

This comes even as the first signal group chat set up by national security adviser Mike Waltz who shared sensitive information with group members took full responsibility for leak of sensitive information. The issue came to light as Jeffrey Goldberg, editor-in-chief of The Atlantic, was added to the group.

The second chat dubbed "Defence - Team Huddle" included 13 people, and according to NYT the group included Hegseth's wife, Jennifer, who is a former Fox News producer, and his brother Phil Hegseth, who was hired at the Pentagon as a Department of Homeland Security liaison and senior adviser. Both have traveled with the defence secretary and attended high-level meetings.

A person familiar with the contents and those who received the messages, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters, confirmed the second chat to The Associated Press.

Hegseth's use of Signal which is a commercially available app not authorized to be used to communicate sensitive or classified national defence information and the sharing of such plans is already under investigation by the Defence Department's acting inspector general.

The White House late Sunday dismissed the report as a "non-story," suggesting that disgruntled former Pentagon employees were spreading false claims. *—PTI*

Pete Hegseth **PHOTO: X**

12 killed in US airstrikes, say Houthi rebels

Dubai, 21 April

US airstrikes targeting Yemen's capital killed 12 people, the Houthi rebels said early Monday. The deaths mark the latest in America's intensified campaign of strikes targeting the rebels. The US military's Central Command did not immediately acknowledge the strikes.

The Houthis described the strike as hitting the Farwa neighbourhood market in Sanaa's Shuub district. That area has been targeted before by the Americans. Strikes overnight into Monday also hit other areas of the country. The strikes come after US airstrikes hit the Ras Isa fuel port in Yemen last week, killing at least 74 people and wounding 171 others. *—PTI*

Two vandals defaced the entrance sign and the temple pillars with the word 'Khalistan' **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

Duo vandalises Hindu temple in Canada

TORONTO, 21 APRIL

The Shree Lakshmi Narayana Mandir in Canada's Surrey was defaced on 19 April by vandals with pro-Khalistan graffiti at its entrance and pillars, the temple authority said in a statement.

"It is with deep sorrow that we inform the community of a disturbing incident that took place in the early hours of 19 April, 2025, at approximately 3 am. Two unidentified individuals vandalised the Shree Lakshmi Narayana Mandir in Surrey by defacing the entrance sign and the temple pillars with the word 'Khalistan', the statement said.

Also, the security camera was stolen during this act.

"We strongly condemn this hateful act of vandalism and theft, which is not only a crime but a direct attack on a sacred space that serves as a spiritual and cultural centre for many families, including elderly members and children," it said.

"An FIR has been officially registered with the Surrey Police, and we are cooperating fully with the authorities in their investigation," the statement added.

"We urge members of the public and leaders at all levels of government to join us in condemning this hate crime. Attacks on places of worship have no place in a respectful and diverse society of Canada," the statement said. *—PTI*

Pak security forces kill 10 suspected terrorists in Punjab

LAHORE, 21 APRIL

Law enforcement agencies on Monday shot dead 10 suspected terrorists of the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Punjab province, Pakistan police said.

According to a statement, personnel of Punjab police and the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) conducted a joint operation in Makarwal in Mianwali district of Punjab, some 325 kilometres from Lahore, in the early hours of Monday and killed at least 10 suspected terrorists and injured several others.

No personnel were killed or injured in the operation, it added. A citizen was injured in the operation because of the firing of the terrorists, the statement said.

Pakistan witnessed a rise in terrorism especially in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces after the end of truce between the Pakistan government and the TTP over two years ago. Pakistan also came into the spotlight following a train hijacking by militants in Balochistan last month in which 26 hostages were killed by Balochistan Liberation Army militants. *—PTI*

Harvard issues 'seek shelter' notice after firing

CAMBRIDGE, 21 APRIL

Transit police in Boston are investigating a shooting that occurred on a subway platform near Harvard University on Sunday, prompting the institution to issue a shelter-in-place order for students and staff. Richard Sullivan, superintendent of the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority Transit Police Department, reported that a gunman fired four or five shots at a "targeted individual" on the southbound platform at Harvard Square station before fleeing the scene. Fortunately, there is no evidence of injuries to the intended target or bystanders. Authorities were alerted to the gunfire around 2.15pm. *—PTI*

Indonesia, China to cooperate on maritime security

TAIPEI, 21 APRIL

Indonesia and China have announced their commitment to enhancing maritime safety and security in the contentious South China Sea, amid ongoing Indonesian concerns over China's activities near the Natuna islands. In a joint meeting of foreign and defence ministers in Beijing, both sides agreed to collaborate on infrastructure, mineral development, and critical security initiatives. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi emphasised the importance of ensuring peace and stability in the region, noting a recent memorandum of understanding on maritime security. While Indonesia is not formally one of the 6 parties with overlapping claims in the South China Sea, it routinely confronts Chinese fishing boats within its exclusive economic zone. Indonesian officials are cautiously engaging with China, reflecting on their growing economic ties, which include significant investments in infrastructure projects. *—PTI*

Polio detected in all Karachi districts before vaccination

KARACHI, 21 APRIL

Pakistan's Health Minister Mustafa Kamal has underscored the pressing need to combat polio after environmental samples revealed the presence of the poliovirus in all districts of Karachi. His comments followed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's launch of a nationwide seven-day anti-polio campaign aimed at vaccinating millions of children under five. Kamal reported that over 44,000 families, including 34,000 in Karachi, declined vaccination during the last campaign, prompting renewed efforts to educate hesitant parents on the vaccine's importance. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah officially initiated the campaign in Karachi, committing to immunising over 10 million children across Sindh, with more than 2.7 million targeted in the city. He emphasised the importance of vaccine availability at schools and public places. *—PTI*

Three Haitian soldiers killed in gang ambush

PORT-AU-PRINCE, 21 APRIL

At least three Haitian soldiers were killed in a gang ambush on the outskirts of the Port-Au-Prince, according to officials. The attack occurred in Kenscoff, a town that has faced intensified violence as law enforcement battles the gang coalition known as Viv Ansanm. Haiti's government confirmed the soldiers' deaths in a post on X, honouring them as defenders of the nation's sovereignty. "These soldiers are not just members of our armed forces. They are worthy sons of the Nation, whose ultimate sacrifice will never be forgotten," the statement read. Reports indicate that the soldiers were part of a military reinforcement mission travelling in an unarmoured vehicle when they were attacked by heavily armed assailants. Graphic videos circulating on social media show soldiers in camouflage retrieving the bodies of the fallen comrades from the truck. *—PTI*

AT LEAST 4 LAKH FLEE SUDAN AS FRESH ATTACKS TARGET CAMPS

DARFUR, 21 APRIL

Renewed attacks on camps, including Zamzam and Abu Shouk that were sheltering those displaced by earlier violence have now forced an estimated 400,000 to 450,000 people to flee again.

According to the Office of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, many are moving towards the town of Tawila, the rugged terrain of Jebel Marra or other remote areas far from health services, clean water and food supplies.

"These population movements are increasingly fluid, unpredictable, and fuelled by ongoing hostilities and fears of a broader offensive on El Fasher," Humanitarian Coordinator Clementine Nkweta-Salami said in a statement on Sunday.

"The scale and gravity of reported violations, including direct attacks on IDPs and humanitarian personnel, are unacceptable. Civilians must never be a target." She further called for UN and NGOs to be granted immediate and sustained access to ensure support. *—Agencies*

SL Cardinal calls to dismantle 'deep state'

COLOMBO, 21 APRIL

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, the head of the Catholic Church in Sri Lanka, has called for the dismantling of what he described as a "deep state" within the country, which he claims is obstructing a credible investigation into the devastating Easter Sunday attacks of 2019.

In a memorial address marking the sixth anniversary of the tragedy, Cardinal Ranjith noted that nine suicide bombers from the local Islamist extremist group, National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ), linked to ISIS, carried out coordinated blasts at three churches and luxury hotels, resulting in 258 deaths, including 11 Indians.

Addressing President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, Ranjith submitted a five-point request, emphasising the need for legislative measures to dismantle the "deep state."

His address coincided with Dissanayake's statement that a 2019 presidential panel report, initiated by former President Maithripala Sirisena, had been forwarded to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Ranjith previously clashed with former President Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, accusing him of ignoring the panel's recommendations for criminal action against those in the previous government for negligence. The Catholic community, frustrated by the lack of justice, supported Dissanayake in last year's presidential election, hoping for accountability and transparency. *—PTI*

Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith **PHOTO: PTI**

POLLS IN A WEEK

Trump helps return of Liberals in Canada

TORONTO, 21 APRIL

- Mark Carney, the first non-UK guy to run the Bank of England, navigated crises and won bipartisan praise as Britain and Canada recovered from the 2008 financial crisis

Until a few months back in Canada, the Liberal party seemed to be headed towards a crushing defeat, until President Donald Trump picked a fight with the US's northern neighbour.

Trump Calling for Canada to be its 51st state has whipped up national sentiments of its people during election year. Mark Carney who was sworn on 14 March and appeared to be the country's shortest-serving prime ministers, but has now become the unicorn for the Liberal party and is now seen as the 'cool and calm' finance guy who can steer the country through a Trump induced financial crisis befalling the country.

In a mid-January poll by Nanos, Liberals trailed the Conservative Party by 47% to 20%. In the latest Nanos poll, the Liberals led by six percentage points. The January poll had a margin of error 3.1 points while the latest poll had a 2.7point margin.

"Timing is everything in politics and Carney entered the political arena at a most favorable time," said Daniel Béland, a political science professor at McGill University in Montreal.

Mark Carney, the first non-UK guy to run the Bank of England, navigated crises and won bipartisan praise as Britain and Canada recovered from the 2008 financial crisis faster than other countries.

Carney's opponent is Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, a career politician and firebrand populist who has campaigned with Trump-like swagger, even taking a page from the "America First" president by adopting the slogan "Canada First." *—PTI*

Mark Carney addresses a campaign **PHOTO: X**

B'deshi Islamists want women's panel abolished

DHAKA, 21 APRIL

An Islamist group in Bangladesh has demanded the abolition of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission constituted for empowerment of women and had recommended equal representation of women in Parliament.

Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh threatening to launch a nationwide campaign to press for its demands, has sought the abolition of the commission, its spokesman Maulana Mamunul Haque told reporters on Sunday.

He said the commission, in its report, noted that the Islamic inheritance provision, the family law and some other religious rules created discrimination against women, which was "objectionable".

The women's commission formed by Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus had recommended several changes to laws related to women's inheritance and family laws.

"Ensuring equality is a Western ideology," said Azizul Haque Islamabadi, another senior leader of Hefazat, considered one of Bangladesh's largest and most influential Islamist groups that largely dominate the country's thousands of non-government madrasas.

The group also expressed strong objections to some provisions proposed by the Constitutional Reform Commission while it rejected the proposal to incorporate pluralism as one of the state principles and instead reinstate reaffirming "faith and trust in Allah" in the constitution. *—PTI*

Google set to battle US government

In search engine monopoly case, Google to face 3-week long hearing

WASHINGTON, 20 APRIL

Google will confront an existential threat Monday as the US government tries to break up the company as punishment for turning its revolutionary search engine into a ruthless monopoly.

The drama will unfold in a Washington courtroom during the next three weeks during hearings that will determine how the company should be penalised for operating an illegal monopoly in search.

The proceedings, known in legal parlance as a "remedy hearing", feature a parade of witnesses that includes Google CEO Sundar Pichai.

The US Department of Justice is asking a federal judge to order a radical shakeup that would ban Google from striking the multibillion dollar deals with Apple and other tech companies that shield its search engine from competition, share its repository of valuable user data with rivals and force a sale of its popular Chrome browser.

Seizing upon its victory in the search case, the Justice Department is now setting out to prove that radical steps must be taken to rein in Google and its corporate parent, Alphabet Inc **PHOTO: WIKI COMMONS**

The moment of reckoning comes four-and-half-years after the Justice Department filed a landmark lawsuit alleging Google's search engine had been abusing its power as the internet's main gateway to stifle competition and innovation for more than a decade.

After the case finally went to trial in 2023, a federal judge last year ruled Google had been making anti-competitive deals to lock in its search engine as the go-to place for digital information on the iPhone, personal computers and other widely used devices, including those running on its own Android software.

Seizing upon its victory in the search case, the Justice Department is now setting out to prove that radical steps must be taken to rein in Google and its corporate parent, Alphabet Inc. *—PTI*

GOOGLE SETTLES ANDROID TV CASE, PAYS RS 20.24 CR SETTLEMENT

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Google has settled with the Competition Commission of India (CCI) a case related to alleged unfair business practices in the Android TV segment and paid a settlement amount of Rs 20.24 crore to the regulator.

This is the first case to be settled under the amended Competition Act, wherein settlement and commitment provisions were introduced in 2023. After receiving a complaint, CCI had ordered a detailed probe in 2021. Later, Google proposed to settle the case and CCI considered the settlement proposal and observed that under the "New India Agreement", Google will provide a standalone license for the Play Store and Play Services for Android smart TVs in India, thereby, removing the requirement to bundle these services or impose default placement conditions, a release said on Monday. "Additionally, by waiving the need for valid Android Compatibility Commitments (ACC) for devices shipped into India that do not include Google apps, OEMs can now sell and develop incompatible Android devices without violating the Television App Distribution Agreement (TADA)," CCI said in the release. OEMs refer to original equipment manufacturers. *—PTI*

Rupee gains 25P settles at 85.13 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 21 APRIL

The rupee sustained its rally for the fifth straight session and settled with gains of 25 paise at 85.13 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, boosted by a sharp fall in the dollar index and a surge in the domestic equities. The dollar index has breached the 99 mark and is trading at its lowest level in three years. At the inter-bank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.15 and moved between the intraday high of 85.03 and the low of 85.19 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 85.13 (provisional), registering a gain of 25 paise over its previous closing level. On Thursday, the rupee closed 26 paise higher at 85.38 against the US dollar. *—PTI*

Ola's Krutrim denies report of $300M fundraise

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Ola's AI arm Krutrim on Monday denied media report on the company's plan to raise USD 300 million. There is a report which talks about AI venture plan to raise USD 300 million. "The article falsely suggests that Krutrim is engaged in discussions to raise external equity capital and misrepresents the financial strategy and operations of the company. Krutrim categorically denies the claims made in the article," the AI firm said in a statement. Krutrim said that it is presently is not raising any external equity as the company is well funded by the promoter and select investors and it continues to invest towards executing its AI strategy. "Any report suggesting otherwise is entirely incorrect," the statement said. *—PTI*

'India to generate 8M jobs per year'

NEW YORK, 21 APRIL

India has to generate 8 million jobs per year at least for next 10-12 years and raise share of manufacturing in GDP as it strives to achieve the vision of becoming a developed country by 2047, Chief Economic Advisor of Government of India V Anantha Nageswaran said.

"We have a vision to achieve a developed India by 2047. The biggest challenge, is that external environment is not going to be so benign for next 10-20 years as one might have had in last 30 years, starting from 1990 or so," Nageswaran said. He was addressing the Columbia India Summit 2025 hosted by Deepak and Neera Raj Centre on Indian Economic Policies at School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University.

He outlined that artificial intelligence, technology, and robotics are challenges that some of developed countries of today do not have to face in developmental journey. *—PTI*

Govt to release unemployment data

MUMBAI, 21 APRIL

The Union government will start releasing the unemployment data on monthly basis beginning 15 May, as against quarterly, a senior official said on Monday. The data to be released will include figures for January, February and March and thereafter, it will be released every month, the official said. India doesn't have a system of high frequency data collection and disclosure on unemployment, unlike other major economies. Till now, the government had been providing data on urban unemployment on a quarterly basis, and combined rural and urban unemployment data on an annual basis *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

GOLD NEARS RS 1L PER 10GM MARK AMID TRADE WAR

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Gold prices inched closer to the psychological mark of Rs 1 lakh per 10g as the bullion rates surged Rs 1,650 in the national capital on Monday on weak dollar and uncertainties over US-China trade war driving demand.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, gold of 99.9 per cent purity reached Rs 99,800 per 10g on Monday. Its value had declined Rs 20 to close at Rs 98,150 per 10g on Friday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity bounced Rs 1,600 to hit a fresh peak of Rs 99,300 per 10g in the local markets. It had fallen marginally to settle at Rs 97,700 per 10g in the previous market close.

In the international markets, spot gold rose to hit a fresh peak of USD 3,397.18 per ounce. Later, it pared some gains to trade at USD 3,393.49 per ounce. *—PTI*

Investors' wealth swells by Rs 32L cr in 5-day rally

Sensex jumped 855.30 points or 1.09 per cent, Nifty climbed 273.90 points or 1.15 per cent **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Investors' wealth soared by Rs 32 lakh crore in the five-day stock rally to Monday powered by foreign fund inflows and a broad-based gains in equities.

On Monday, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 855.30 points or 1.09 per cent to settle above the 79,000 mark at 79,408.50.

The NSE Nifty climbed 273.90 points or 1.15 per cent to close at 24,125.55. In the past five-days, the BSE barometer zoomed 5,561.35 points or 7.53 per cent.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms surged by Rs 32,03,295.8 crore to Rs 4,25,85,629.02 crore in five trading days.

With foreign investors fast losing their confidence in US economy and Trump's flip-flop tariff policy, we are seeing renewed foreign inflows into markets which are also driving indices higher, he added.

From the Sensex firms, Tech Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, Power Grid, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, HCL Tech, Axis Bank, State Bank of India, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, Reliance Industries and Tata Steel were the biggest gainers. *—PTI*

Gensol shares tumble 5% again

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Shares of Gensol Engineering crashed five per cent to hit another lower circuit limit on Monday amid the ongoing crisis at the firm. Sebi, through its interim order o n Tuesday last week, barred brothers Anmol Singh Jaggi and Puneet Singh Jaggi from accessing the securities markets until further notice. The action comes amid accusations of siphoning off loan funds from their publicly listed company Gensol Engineering for personal use, raising concerns over corporate governance and financial misconduct. The stock tanked 4.98 per cent to Rs 111.65. *—PTI*

LIC hikes its stake in BoB to 7.05%

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Insurance behemoth LIC on Monday said it has increased its stake in state-owned Bank of Baroda (BoB) by nearly two per cent to 7.05 per cent. The life insurance company has acquired additional 10.45 crore shares from open market over a period of one-and-a-half year, LIC said in a regulatory filing. With the acquisition done between 20 November, 2023 and 16 April, 2025, LIC's stake in the Mumbai-based bank has increased from 5.03 per cent to 7.05 per cent, it said. Shares of Bank of Baroda were trading at Rs 250.20 apiece, up 3.09 per cent on the BSE. *—PTI*

PHOTO:FREEPIK

India should restore soybean exports to US: SEA

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

India should prioritise reviving exports of organic non-GMO soybean and soybean meal to US during ongoing Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) negotiations, industry body Solvent Extractors Association (SEA) said on Monday. India previously exported 150,000-200,000 tonnes of organic, non-GMO soybean products to US before safeguard duties imposed after opposition from domestic US producers effectively halted this trade, according to SEA. The two countries are currently negotiating a bilateral trade agreement. SEA also raised concerns about non-standardised packaging of edible oils following regulatory changes in 2022, saying varied pack sizes have created consumer confusion and price comparison difficulties. The industry body has urged the Ministry of Consumer Affairs to reinstate standardised packaging requirements for edible oils to improve transparency and consumer trust. *—PTI*

Toshiba inks Rs 562 cr pact in Telangana

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Toshiba Energy Systems on Monday said its arm Toshiba Transmission has inked an initial pact to invest about Rs 562 crore to expand manufacturing capacity in Telangana.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) signing ceremony was held in Tokyo in the presence of Telangana Chief Minister Anumula Revanth Reddy and Hiroshi Furuta, Chairman and Managing Director, Toshiba Transmission & Distribution Systems (India) Private Limited (TTDI).

TTDI, a subsidiary of Toshiba Energy Systems & Solutions Corporation (Japan), has signed the MoU with Telangana government on 18 April, 2025, to advance its previously announced investment of JPY Rs 562 crore for expanding its manufacturing capabilities in the state, according to a statement.

The signing was held in the presence of Telangana Chief Minister Anumula Revanth Reddy and Chairman and Managing Director, Toshiba Transmission & Distribution Systems Hiroshi Furuta **PHOTO: X @revanth_anumula**

"This MoU will bolster Toshiba's manufacturing footprint in India and contribute to local employment and skills development. With strong support from the Government of Telangana, we are poised to accelerate our manufacturing capabilities and deliver high-quality, sustainable energy solutions for India and the world," Furuta said.

The investment of Rs 562 crore is expected to generate over 250 direct jobs over three years from FY2024. *—PTI*

Leather and footwear exports up 25% to $5.7B

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

PHOTO: PTI

The country's leather, non-leather footwear and products' exports rose by about 25 per cent year-on-year to USD 5.7 billion in 2024-25 and the shipments are likely to cross the USD 6.5 billion mark this fiscal, exporters' body CLE said on Monday.

Council for Leather Exports (CLE) said that demands in both developed and developing countries are "healthy". "In 2024-25, we have exceeded exports target by USD 1 billion set up by the department of commerce and going by this trend, our exports will cross USD 6.5 billion in 2025-26," CLE Executive Director R Selvam said. He said the sector is recording growth despite global uncertainties.

CLE Chairman Rajendra Kumar Jalan said exports are going well in both US and UK, the key export destinations for India.

Due to 10 per cent tariff hike, all the exporters are giving discounts to buyers, but there were no order cancellations, Jalan said. *—PTI*

DECLINE IN CRUDE PRICES BOOSTS INDIA'S RESILIENCE

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

As crude oil prices decline sharply and global commodity markets reel under pressure, India's macroeconomic fundamentals appear much stronger compared to previous global crises, highlights a report by Motilal Oswal.

The report believed that despite global uncertainties, the impact on India's economic growth could remain limited, thanks to domestic resilience and improved fiscal health.] The report also highlighted that key indicators such as the Balance of Payments (BoP), Current Account Deficit (CAD), and fiscal deficit are showing considerable strength, especially when compared to earlier stress periods like the 2013 Taper Tantrum.

Unlike the Global Financial Crisis or the Credit Crisis, the report mentioned that Indian corporates and banks are entering this phase with healthier balance sheets, significantly reduced debts and adequate capital buffers.

For the Indian economy the report mentioned that despite slowdown phase overall economic indicators are in favour.

"The pendulum has swung the other way for all three drivers - fiscal, monetary and regulatory," the report said. *—ANI*

ANTI-SPAM TOOL

Airtel expands alert coverage toint'l calls

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

Bharti Airtel on Monday announced two new features in its ongoing offensive against spam, as it expanded detection coverage to international calls and SMSes

Airtel introduced spam alert display in ten Indian languages, including Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Urdu, Punjabi and Telugu.

Airtel said it expects to nullify the growing and alarming trend of spam calls originating and being funnelled through international networks into India by fraudsters amid a 12 per cent rise in such attempts in the last six months.

"Following the launch of its AI-powered spam detection tool that flagged over 27.5 billion calls as spam to its customers, Airtel today announced the introduction of two significant enhancements aimed at staying ahead of spammers," the company said in a release.

Airtel introduced spam alert display in ten Indian languages **PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA**

- Airtel's AI-powered tool will now screen and alert customers to all spam calls and SMSes originating from international networks.

Customers will now receive spam alerts for calls and SMS messages in their preferred Indian languages.

"This new feature will be available in nine vernacular languages, with plans to add more in the future," the release noted.

Further, Airtel's AI-powered tool will now screen and alert customers to all spam calls and SMSes originating from international networks.

Airtel expects to nullify this growing challenge with its new feature.

Siddharth Sharma, Director Marketing and CEO Connected Homes, Bharti Airtel, said: "Customers and their feedback are at the heart of everything we do. After carefully analysing customer feedback, we have enhanced our solutions to better serve the linguistic diversity of India". *—PTI*

DC look to openers against confident LSG

With Lucknow's bowlers choking the opponents, DC have their task cut out

LUCKNOW, 21 APRIL

Delhi Capitals will expect a more productive effort from their openers when they visit the 'City of Nawabs' to face an increasingly confident Lucknow Super Giants in an IPL match on Tuesday.

The Capitals' opening has been a bit of roulette so far this season with Faf du Plessis, Jake Fraser-McGurk, Abhishek Porel and the latest entrant Karun Nair coming in at the pole position.

In fact, in the last five matches they had three different opening combinations, producing partnerships of 23, 34 0, 9, 0. Du Plessis' fitness will be closely watched ahead of this match, as the team looks to bank on his experience.

However, so far, it looked like a minor glitch because the Capitals have won five of their seven matches and the middle-order under the aegis of KL Rahul worked like a well-oiled machine.

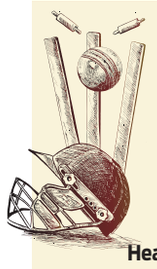
The Capitals will face Lucknow's competent bowling unit of Digvesh Rathi, Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan and Shardul Thakur which has choked the opposition without much fanfare. The way Avesh excelled in the 18th and 20th over against Rajasthan Royals in LSG's two-run win is an example of their prowess.

In contrast, the Lucknow outfit boasts a solid top three with Mitchell Marsh, Nicholas Pooran and Aiden Markram firing more often than not and it has given them an edge in the Power Play. —*PTI*

Lucknow Super Giants' Mayank Yadav with Delhi Capitals' KL Rahul during a practice session *PHOTO: PTI*

> We just take it one game at a time and if we lose a few, what will be important for us is to get the right combination for next year
>
> -MS Dhoni, Chennai Super Kings Captain

MATCH TIMINGS



LSG vs DC
Match starts at
7.30 pm IST

Head to head	PLAYED : 6
	LSG: 3
	DC: 3

CAB seek ban on Bhogle, Doull from Eden Gardens IPL games

Kolkata, 21 April

The Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) has sought to ban Harsha Bhogle and Simon Doull from commentating the remaining matches of the 2025 IPL. In a letter written to the BCCI, the CAB red-flagged comments. The two had criticised the pitch and role of ground curator Sujan Mukherjee. *-Agencies*

Injured Samson to miss RCB game, will continue rehab in Jaipur

Jaipur, 21 April : Rajasthan Royals on Monday confirmed that skipper Sanju Samson will miss the upcoming away game against Royal Challengers Bengaluru as he continues his recovery from the side-strain he suffered during the game against Delhi Capitals. Samson has already missed Royals' home against Lucknow Super Giants. RR is scheduled to clash with RCB on Thursday. In Samson's absence, Riyan Parag will continue to lead the side and Dhruv Jurel is expected to continue to keep wickets. *-PTI*

Indian women's hockey team leaves for Australia

BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

The Indian women's hockey team led by Salima Tete has left for Australia to compete in a five-match friendly series starting 26 April in Perth, an engagement that will be crucial preparation for the side ahead of the FIH Pro League's European leg in June. The series will begin with two matches against Australia A on 26 and 27 April, followed by three encounters against world No. 5 ranked Australian senior team on 1, 3, and 4 May, at the Perth Hockey Stadium. India will start the European leg of the campaign on 7 June against the Netherlands. *—PTI*

Saudi says not ready to host cricket matches

JEDDAH, 21 APRIL

Saudi Arabia will have to wait for hosting a major cricketing event till the required infrastructure is built for the sport majorly played by the South Asian expats in the Kingdom, indicated sports minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal. As part of Vision 2030, Saudi Arabia wants to become a hub of sporting events and has already invested heavily in Formula 1, golf and is set to host the FIFA World Cup in 2034. The sports minister said the feasibility of hosting a big ticket cricket event will increase when the planned city of Qiddiya is ready. Part of the mega project is a racetrack, which is expected to be completed by 2027 following construction delays, but it is not known yet if a cricket facility will be constructed there. *—PTI*

PHOTO:ANI

IYER, KISHAN BACK

BCCI Central Contracts retains Rohit, Virat at top

NEW DELHI, 21 APRIL

The BCCI on Monday retained megastars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli in the top bracket of its annual players contract list.

The out-of-favour duo of Shreyas Iyer and Ishan Kishan also returned to the fold in lower brackets in a 34-strong list of centrally-contracted players, which also includes pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja in the highest-paid A+ category.

Rishabh Pant, who was demoted to category B during the 2023-24 season as he didn't play due to his recovery from a life-threatening accident, is back in A category.

A+ category (Rs 7 crore): Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, Ravindra Jadeja

A category (Rs 5 crore): Mohammed Siraj, KL Rahul, Shubman Gill, Hardik Pandya, Mohammed Shami, Rishabh Pant

B category (Rs 3 crore): Suryakumar Yadav, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shreyas Iyer.

C category (Rs 1 crore): Rinku Singh, Tilak Verma, Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shivam Dube, Ravi Bishnoi, Washington Sundar, Mukesh Kumar, Sanju Samson, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Rajat Patidar, Dhruv Jurel, Sarfaraz Khan, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Ishan Kishan, Abhishek Sharma, Akash Deep, Varun Chakaravarthy, Harshit Rana. *—PTI*

Neeraj Chopra Classic shifted to Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 21 APRIL

The maiden edition of Neeraj Chopra Classic javelin throw event on 24 May has been shifted from Panchkula to Bengaluru due to inadequate lighting at the original venue for live telecast but the field will be teeming with stars as the likes of Anderson Peters and Thomas Rohler have confirmed their participation.

Peters, who hails from Grenada, is a two-time world champion and Rohler is the gold-medallist from the 2016 Olympics. Chopra said he has also invited Pakistani Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem who is, however, yet to confirm participation.

The competition has been granted category A status by World Athletics.

"I wanted the event in Panchkula but there are certain issues related to lighting at the stadium. World Athletics requirement is 600 lux for international broadcast, which is not," Chopra said. *—PTI*

Piastri wins Saudi Grand Prix, takes overall lead in F1

JEDDAH, 21 APRIL

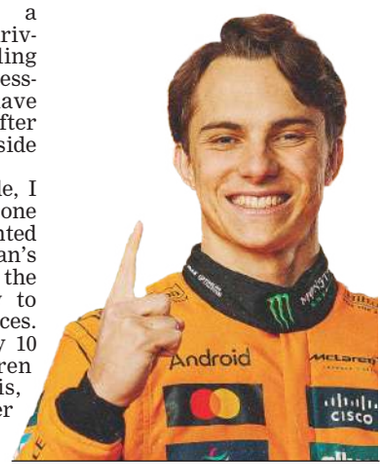
Oscar Piastri continued his impressive start to the Formula 1 season by clinching victory at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, propelling him to the top of the championship standings for the first time.

In a race marked by a pivotal penalty, Piastri outmanoeuvred reigning champion Max Verstappen, who initially started from pole position. Verstappen incurred a five-second penalty for driving off-track while battling Piastri, who argued successfully that he should have retained his position after emerging ahead on the inside of the first corner.

"Once I got on the inside, I wasn't coming out of turn one in second," Piastri commented after the race. The Australian's win marks his third of the season, raising his tally to three victories in five races. He leads the standings by 10 points over his McLaren teammate Lando Norris, who finished fourth after starting from tenth.

Verstappen, now third in the championship, expressed his discontent over the penalty, stating, "the rest is what it is," after the race.

Piastri's performance notably makes him the first Australian to lead the standings since Mark Webber in 2010. The victory cements Piastri's burgeoning reputation in the sport, with no Australian having won the title since Alan Jones in 1980. *—PTI*



Justin Thomas wins in RBC Heritage playoffs

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, 21 APRIL

Justin Thomas ended nearly three years without a victory by making a birdie putt from just outside 20 feet in a playoff at Harbour Town to beat Andrew Novak in the RBC Heritage. Thomas played bogey-free in dry, fast conditions for a 3-under 68, making a 25-foot birdie putt on the 16th that looked like it might be the winner until Novak, matched him with a big birdie of his own for a 68. Novak, who has had three good chances to win in his last 14 tournaments, had an 8-foot birdie putt on the 18th hole in regulation that was left all the way. He missed from just inside 35 feet. Thomas' putt was so pure that Thomas dropped his putter before the ball dropped. *—PTI*

Valverde beats Real Madrid to 1–0 win

MADRID, 21 APRIL

Still upset at their team's midweek exit from the Champions League, Real Madrid fans jeered suspended Kylian Mbappé and then cheered Federico Valverde after he scored late in a 1–0 win over Athletic Bilbao in the Spanish league on Sunday.

The narrow victory for second-placed Madrid kept some pressure on leader Barcelona.

Mbappé, serving a red-card suspension, was jeered by many fans at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium four days after he had already been booed in Madrid's 2–1 second-leg loss to Arsenal in the quarterfinals of the Champions League. The Spanish powerhouse was eliminated 5–1 on aggregate from a competition it has won a record 15 times.

"We did well today," Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said. "We wanted to win again and rebound from the elimination. The team came through and Fede was key. This victory gives us a boost."

Valverde scored with a well-placed shot from the right edge of the penalty area. *—PTI*

Barcelona takes 4–1 lead over Chelsea

Barcelona's substitute Claudia Pina shot two goals, while her teammates Ewa Pajor and Irene Paredes chipped in with one apiece. Sandy Baltimore scored for Chelsea. The two are meeting in the last four for the third consecutive season *PHOTO: X/ UEFA Women's Champions League*

BARCELONA, 21 APRIL

Barcelona recovered from a missed penalty by Alexia Putellas to take a commanding 4–1 lead over Chelsea in the Women's Champions League semifinals on Sunday.

Putellas had her penalty kick saved by Chelsea goalkeeper Hannah Hampton in the 12th minute but the Catalan club rallied with a pair of goals by substitute Claudia Pina and one each from Ewa Pajor and Irene Paredes.

Sandy Baltimore scored for Chelsea.

"No winning scoreline is enough," Barcelona coach Pere Romeu said. "There's huge evidence in soccer that you can't ever rely on a first-leg lead. We are going to have a beautiful battle over there at Stamford Bridge."

Chelsea will host the return semifinal leg next Sunday and the winner on aggregate will advance to the final in Lisbon next month.

It was the eighth straight win for defending champion Barcelona in the European women's competition. It has scored 40 goals across those eight consecutive wins since losing 2-0 to Manchester City.

Barcelona and Chelsea are meeting in the last four for the third consecutive season. Barcelona has advanced each time. *—PTI*

Sikkim to host its first car rally tomorrow

GANGTOK, 21 APRIL

Sikkim is all set to host its first car rally, which has been organised as part of the year-long celebrations to mark the 50 years of statehood, officials said on Monday. Mountain Rush, the time, speed, distance (TSD) rally, will be officially flagged off from the Ridge Park in Gangtok on 23 April, they said. The rally is being held under the supervision of the Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India, they added. The rally has attracted the highest number of national champions ever to participate in a single event, officials said. The event aims to promote rural tourism and Sikkim's culture, in addition to boosting motorsports. From Gangtok, the rallyists will head to Lachung. The next destination is Ravangla, followed by Soreng. From Soreng, the rallyists will proceed towards Gangtok. *—PTI*

MOMENTS AWAY

Liverpool needs 1 win to secure PL title

MANCHESTER, 21 APRIL

With Liverpool's 1-0 victory over Leicester on Sunday, the Premier League tile is so close, the Merseyside club can almost touch it. Trent Alexander-Arnold's second-half strike pushed the club to within one more win of a record-equalling 20th English league crown.

"One win away now, it's very close," Alexander-Arnold said, after tearing his jersey off in celebration after his goal.

Against a Leicester team that needed to win to hold off relegation, Liverpool struggled to find a breakthrough despite hitting the frame of the goal - including twice in the build-up to Alexander-Arnold's strike.

Leicester also saw an effort from Wilfred Ndidi hit the post in the first half and Coady had a goal ruled out for a foul on Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson.

On came Alexander-Arnold, who is widely tipped to join Real Madrid at the end of the season, and he provided the decisive moment.

After a goalmouth scramble had seen Mohamed Salah and Diogo Jota hit the woodwork, Alexander-Arnold's shot went under the body of Hermansen. The goal sparked wild scenes as Alexander-Arnold ran to the corner to celebrate with the traveling supporters.

Liverpool's last title in 2020 came when teams had to play behind closed doors because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"To be so close to sealing for some of us a second league title, and for a lot of us a first league title, but especially in front of fans is very special," Alexander-Arnold said.

Second place Arsenal ensured that Liverpool would have to wait a while longer for its crowning moment after routing Ipswich 4-0 earlier Sunday. And for long periods at the King Power Stadium, Leicester threatened to frustrate Liverpool— even having a Conor Coady goal disallowed before Alexander-Arnold's winner. *—PTI*

Liverpool's Trent Alexander-Arnold, second right tears his jersey off after scoring against Leicester *PHOTO: PTI*

MU sets another unwanted Premier League record

MANCHESTER, 21 APRIL

- AThe 15th league loss is the most for any United team since 89-90. It is also set to on course to record its lowest finish in the Premier League

Manchester United set another unwanted club record on Sunday after losing 1-0 to Wolverhampton.

A 15th league loss of the season is the most United has suffered in any single campaign in the Premier League era and emphasizes the club's ongoing decline.

United has dominated England's top flight since the inception of the Premier League in 1992 — winning 13 titles. But it has not been crowned champion since 2013 when former manager Alex Ferguson retired.

Last season it set a new high for league losses with 14 defeats. With five rounds still to go, Ruben Amorim's team has already gone past that benchmark.

A 15th league loss is the most for any United team since the 1989-90 campaign when it was defeated 16 times in England's old Division One.

Premier League statistician Opta said an eighth home defeat in the league was the most since United was beaten nine times in 1962-63.

The record 20-time English champion is also on course to record its lowest league finish in the Premier League.

The previous low was set by Erik ten Hag's team last season when finishing eighth in the standings - the club's worst final position in 34 years. United is currently 14th and 11 points behind eighth-placed Bournemouth. *—PTI*